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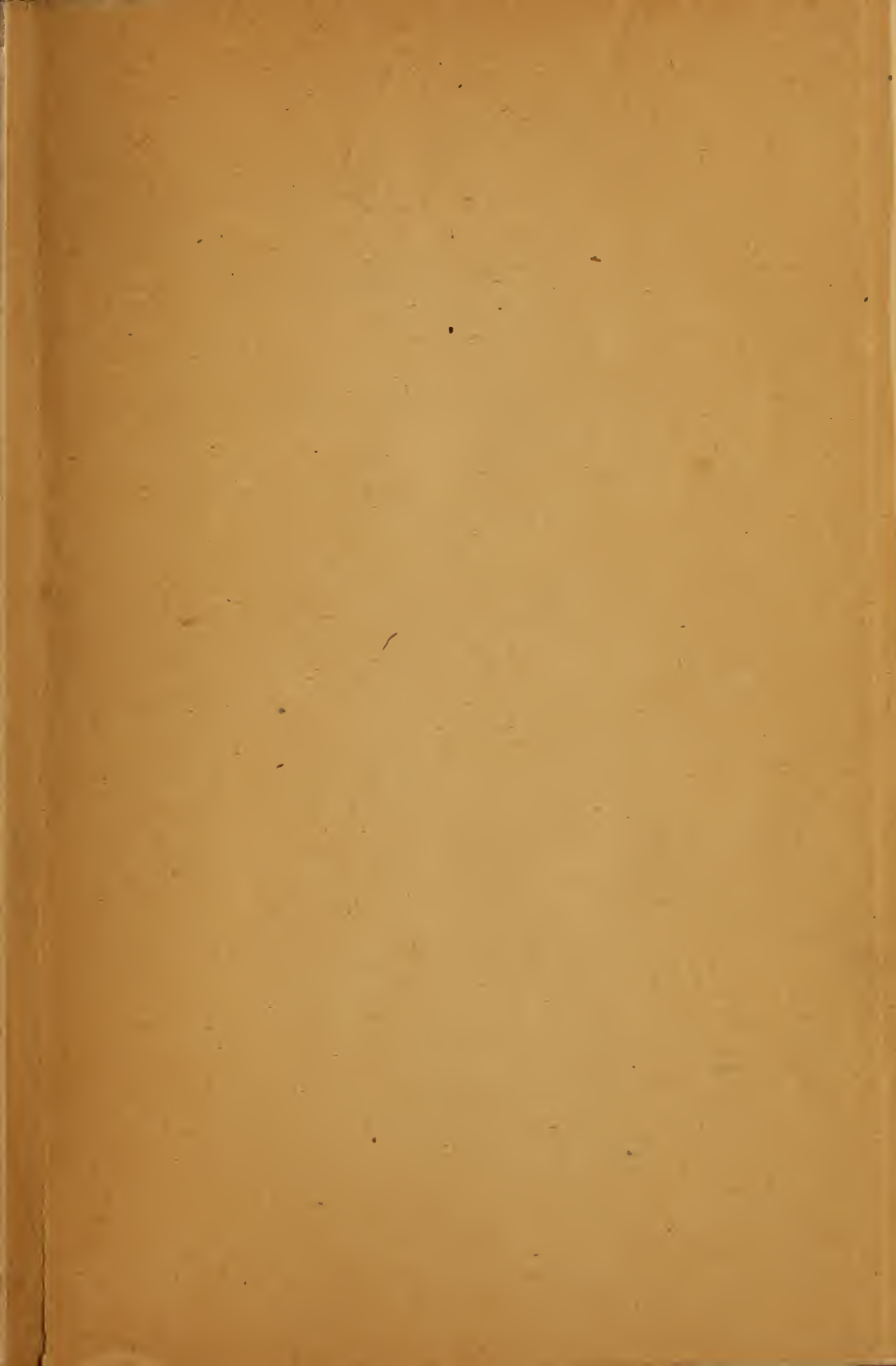
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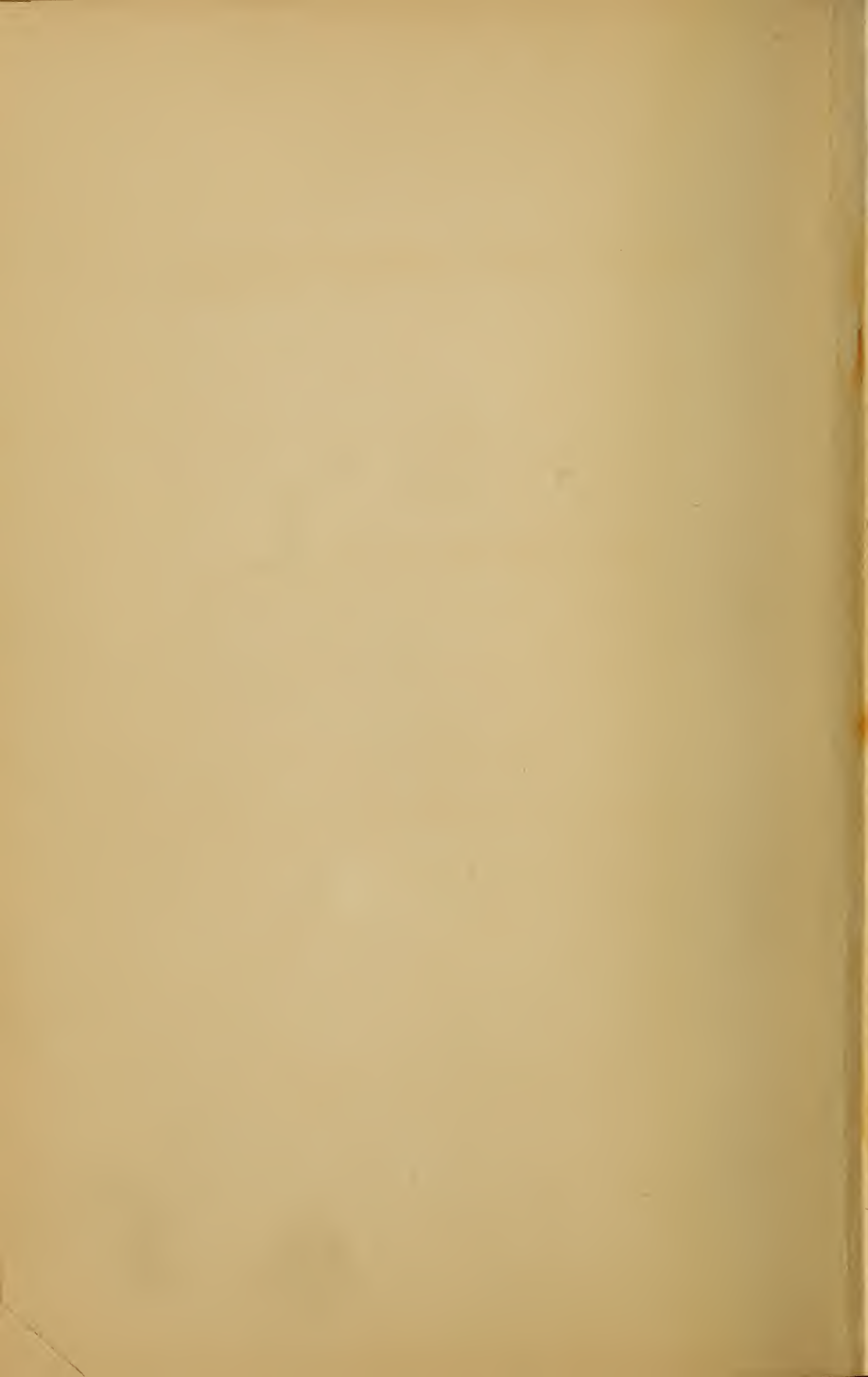
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.



HELPS AND HINDERANCES

EMILY HUNTINGTON MILLER.

NEW YORK
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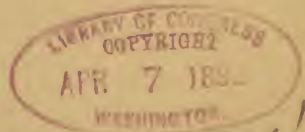
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EMILY HUNTINGTON MILLER

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"I will do my best to do the best."—ARTHUR WARWICK, 1637

NEW YORK: HUNT & EATON
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HELPS AND HINDERANCES.

WEIGHTS OR WINGS?

HOW truly Paul read human nature when he penned that injunction to those who would run with patience the race set before them, "laying aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us!" The first warning is against the weights. Sin besets us as a declared enemy, and when he shows his face we turn away from him; we put him behind our backs; we wage open warfare with him; we feel that it is a question of conquest or defeat. But the weights—there

are so many of them, and we find that we can run, after a fashion, in spite of them. Some of them are even pleasant things to take along, and we are slow to believe they really hinder our progress. We see others for whom we have great respect carrying them also, and so we go on, satisfied that our faces are set in the right direction, and scarcely conscious how much of the strength with which we press toward the mark is expended in simply carrying along these weights with which we have burdened ourselves.

“If I really thought it was wrong,” says the young Christian; “but I cannot see that it harms me at all.” As if absolute right and wrong or personal damage were the highest tests to which any course of action could be brought. The Bible sets up for us a far higher standard when it condemns

things that are lawful simply because they are not expedient, because they do not edify ; things that are harmless because they are hinderances to others. If I send a messenger on my errands he has no right so to load himself down that he can only creep where I have bidden him haste, neither has a man on the king's highway a right to carry a load that, projecting right and left, keeps every one else back. Sit down and consider your equipment.

We sometimes sing :

“ Our souls, how heavily they go
To reach immortal joys.”

But it may be they cannot use their wings because of unnecessary weights which we have fastened upon them. Can you say as Paul did, “ I keep under my body ? ” Do you bring the authority of an enlightened conscience to bear upon the kind and the

quantity of food you eat, your hours of sleep, your habits of exercise, of amusement, of all bodily appetites? Do you rule your body, or does your body rule you? Do you allow yourself articles of food and drink which please the palate and are considered harmless by others, in spite of your consciousness that they do not agree with you? Do you allow your enthusiasm for athletic sports to entice you to an expenditure of time and strength that you cannot afford, or the fascination of a story to rob you of needed sleep, or the luxury of a morning nap to steal from you your opportunity for reading and prayer? Have you expensive habits which tax more and more heavily the income of which you are only steward, and which lead you into doubtful and dangerous companionships? Are you forming friendships whose influence

is not to uplift, but rather to pull down, and are you venturing into temptation with blind confidence in your power to resist?

All these are solemn questions for the soul to ask and answer honestly, for there is but one easy way to run, and that is to lay aside every weight, be it a good or a bad thing, when it proves a hinderance. "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out," said Christ, and surely an immortal soul need not hesitate at the casting away of such trivial things as those that hang upon us. It is because they are trivial that we do not give them any thought, or refuse to believe that they are real hinderances. We even venture upon more deadly risks and sport with acknowledged danger, confident in our purpose and ability not to go beyond retreat. It is the old story of Samson, childishly making a plaything of

his enormous strength to perpetrate fierce jokes upon his enemies—the lesson of powers perverted, opportunity wasted, trust betrayed. The man knows there is danger, but it amuses him to experiment with it, to show that he is strong enough to defy it, and all the time, though he does not suspect it, his strength is going from him. By and by he ventures a little too far, and the Philistines have him, bound, blind, grinding in the mills of a bitter servitude. Samson's strength began to go from him long before Delilah cut his hair. He was paving the way for that betrayal when he wasted his powers in evil, and put his confidence simply in the bare observance of his Nazarite's vow, and not in the presence of the Lord God. Ruin began with what, in the light of his day and generation, seemed to him as small a transgression as does

to you the indulgence in food or drink which you know clogs your digestion and clouds your intellect.

You were not meant to creep but to soar. You are to mount up with wings as eagles, to run and not be weary, to walk and not faint. It is worth your while to strip for the race by throwing aside these hindering things, these weights of custom and habit and appetite, that your running may be like the swift course of the ostrich, carried on tireless feet, buoyed by strong wings.

THE AMUSEMENT QUESTION.

IAM inclined to think that much which is said to young Christians upon this subject of amusements is based, if not upon a false theory, at least upon the careless assumption that there is a class of amusements perfectly right and admissible for people who are not Christians, which become wrong when one assumes Christian vows. We speak of them broadly as worldly pleasures, and the question in relation to them was recently put to me by an earnest young man, "Ought not a Christian to abstain entirely from worldly pleasures?"

What do we mean by worldly pleasures? Not sinful pleasures, surely, for

then there could be no question ; but those forms of amusement which are indulged in by people who are not Christian.

AN IMPORTANT DISTINCTION.

Let us notice first that an amusement is not necessarily sinful or harmful because it is enjoyed by worldly people. We share even with the beasts the satisfaction derived from food and sleep and shelter, and add to this satisfaction because of our higher nature an enjoyment of which they are not capable. To this enjoyment the Christian adds the further delight of recognizing in temporal benefits the kind provision of a Father's hand, so that a form of pleasure which appeals to all, because of our organization as human beings, may give greater delight to those who see in it also the loving-kindness of God.

When we speak, therefore, of worldly pleasures let us remember that pleasant things are not necessarily wrong; that the self-denial which Christ enjoins upon us has nothing to do with acts of penance, but is the turning of the whole nature from self-seeking and self-service, and its voluntary assumption of a new Master. All the real joy and pleasure of this life belong of right to the Christian. God gives us not only for our need, but "He giveth us all things richly to enjoy." The people who realize that the Creator of the universe is their Father, that they are his loving and obedient children, that he cares for their smallest interests, that he is a very present help in time of trouble, that every event of their lives comes to them directly from his loving hand, and that, when this life is over, a home awaits them whose joys are

eternal and beyond conception—surely they are the only people who can heartily enjoy the life that now is.

The question is not, Shall the young Christians have pleasures and amusements? but, What pleasures are helpful and health-giving, and what are injurious? And in answering it I repeat the statement that all the real pleasure and joy of this life belong to the Christian, and add this further proposition, "Whatever is right for any one to do is right for the Christian."

THE WRONG ALWAYS INJURIOUS.

If a thing is wrong it must be because on the whole it is injurious either to yourself or others. That is the ground of all moral obligation. A thing is not wrong because displeasing to God, but displeasing because it is wrong, and wrong because

injurious. God's supreme desire is the supreme good of his children, and things are pleasing or displeasing to him according as they do or do not tend toward this good. The obligation to do nothing which will be injurious to yourself or others rests with equal force upon all. Laws are made for all, not for those who choose to admit their obligation. You would not admit it as an excuse for disobedience in a child that he said, "I do not profess to be trying to please my father," or in a citizen that he declares, "I do not profess to be governed by the laws of my country." A Christian is one who yields obedience to laws that are binding upon all mankind; therefore, if a thing is wrong for a Christian it is wrong for every one, and the converse is equally true. The influence of wrong-doing on the part of the Christian is undoubtedly

greater, since, to his violation of the great law by the specific act, he adds the power of his example in shaking the confidence of men in the sincerity of Christian profession, and in leading weaker ones astray who look to him as a safe guide; but there is nothing of which it may truthfully be said, "It is wrong for you because you are a Christian, but right for me because I do not profess to be." This brings us down to the question, "What pleasures and amusements are right, and what wrong?"—that is, "What on the whole are injurious to myself or to others through me, and then I shall know, not what is right for a Christian, simply, but what is right for any one." We are quite in the habit of stopping at this point and dismissing the subject by saying, "O, well, that is a matter each one must decide for himself! It is purely an affair of

individual judgment." Perhaps so, yet for the guidance of individual judgment certain great principles exist which must hold for every one, certain questions must be asked in every case.

CERTAIN GREAT PRINCIPLES.

1. God holds us responsible for our bodies as well as our souls. There is no warrant in the Bible for despising and misusing the wonderful mechanism whose creation was as much the work of divine skill as the breath of God which endowed it with a living soul to inspire and rule over it, and we owe the revisers of the New Testament a debt of gratitude for having taken from its unauthorized place in the Authorized Version the phrase, "this vile body." Does any one imagine that the apostle who said, "Know ye not, brethren, that your

bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost?" could ever have intended to speak of that temple as vile?

2. A sound, healthy body, including in its functions vigorous mental activities, demands a varied round of occupation, rest, and actual diversion. Especially is this the case with the young, and God has made provision for the need by giving them a keen relish for what are commonly called the pleasures of life in distinction from its work, just as he made provision for the special need of food to repair the waste and carry on the rapid growth of the body by giving them keen appetites for food and capability for abundant sleep. When, therefore, I bring my pleasures to the bar of judgment, let me look at them from a purely physical view, and ask, "What is the effect of this particular form of amusement on my body? Does it

bring needed rest and relaxation to overstrained muscles? Does it supply healthful exercise that invigorates and develops without harmful reaction? Does it clear my brain, quicken my circulation, and feed my lungs with pure air, so that I can work better, sleep better, think better?" So far it is a good thing. Does it bring me into a heated, impure atmosphere? Does its fascination lead me to excess, that exhausts instead of recreates? Does it trespass upon the hours of sleep so that my body is more severely taxed than by the work of the day? Does the reaction from its excitement give me a sluggish brain and destroy my relish for the simple pleasures and common duties of life? Then it is unquestionably a bad thing.

3. Let me consider my property. Does this amusement necessarily involve an outlay of money that is

likely to go on increasing in amount? What returns, then, shall I get for my investment? Have I any right to spend upon what is simply an amusement that for which I am held to account as a steward? Is this thing into which I propose to put my money, week by week, and year by year, something that will make me any satisfactory return? Can I afford to make so large an investment for so small profits?

4. Let me consider my time. What shall I have to show by and by as the result of the time I devote to this amusement? Will it discipline and cultivate my mind, improve my taste, develop noble and heroic traits of character, enable me the better to appreciate honor and manhood, and inspire me with a keener hatred of vice and meanness? Or shall I find that my moral sense is dulled, that

vice becomes sometimes amusing rather than repulsive, and a growing appetite for excitement destroys my self-control? These are broad and general grounds, but it is exactly in this way that all fair judgment must be formed. Laws are not made for exceptional cases, but for the great aggregate of results.

While amusements minister to a legitimate appetite of your nature you are not to forget that this is not the end of your life. You were not put into the world to be amused or to amuse yourself. You are here to work; to lend a hand to all good; to build up character in yourself and in others, and when you have considered all the possible bearings of a question upon yourself you have still to consider it for others for whom, whether you choose or not, you are responsible. Take the illustration of

the theater. Suppose you have proved to your own satisfaction that you can occasionally witness a good play without injury; that by no means settles the question of duty. Is it not true that, on the whole, the theater as an institution is injurious to morals? Is it not compelled to draw its attractions, if not from absolute vice, at least from a border-land that lies very near to it? Is not the character of the men and women who do its work such, as a class, that we are scarcely shocked at the grossest scandals in their private life, but regard them almost as a matter of course? This being the fact beyond dispute, can you afford by your money or your example to help sustain such an institution?

The same argument holds good again at card-playing. The card-party in the private parlor may be but a

harmless evening diversion to the young lady who gives it, an innocent refuge for the emptiness and stupidity which cannot converse because it will not take the trouble to think, but to some of her guests be fatal food for a passion which grows to an insanity not second to the appetite for strong drink, and which its victim will gratify at any cost. The whole interest of a game of cards in the parlor or the saloon turns upon the chance involved, whether it be the mere delight of winning or the more substantial stake; and what essential difference is there between playing for five dollars in a saloon and playing in a parlor for the prize bought with the five dollars? Do you say a difference in the demoralizing surroundings? But the passion acquired and encouraged in the one place has led many a young man to the other. Temptation that

never finds the young woman in her sheltered life assails her brother and friend at every step, and many a fair young girl would quail in horror could she know the story of scores who have been drawn into the deadly snares of the gambling-den and the billiard-hall by an irresistible desire to gratify the skill first acquired in her society in a so-called Christian home. Is any mere amusement worth such a possible price?

I might add to the list the dance, and from a purely physical standpoint show you that, to the great majority of those who participate in it, it is a tax upon the vital forces which they cannot afford to meet, and is a direct temptation to the fatal expedient of rousing by stimulation the exhausted body and weary brain.

These things and others classed in society as amusements have no proper

claim to the name ; they are in every sense dissipation, wasting body, brain, force of character, mental and moral power. God does not say of every transgression, "Thou shalt not." He leaves to you the work of judgment and reason ; and having given you the ability to decide, holds you responsible for the decision, a responsibility which you cannot escape by pleading the usage of society, and allowing yourself to be carried helplessly along by its force.

But to the Christian is added the very highest motive for regarding the obligations so laid upon him, a desire for such a life as shall bring him into communion and fellowship with God. To all other questions he is bound to add, "Does this form of amusement interfere with my spiritual growth? does it unfit me for prayer? does it weaken my desire for a higher

spiritual life, and lead me away from God?"

If it does, that ought to settle the question for me. Where I cannot go and feel that my Father is with me, there I will not go; what I cannot do without hiding from my soul the clear shining of his face, that I will not do, but let me not dishonor him by counting him a hard master, or speaking of his service as if he were like the gods of the heathen, pleased with renunciation and sacrifice for their own sake. I have no doubt he looks with approval upon the gladness and hearty merriment of youth as an earthly parent upon the sports of his children, even though to him their sports and amusements must seem trivial. He has filled the world with possibilities of rational pleasure for your sake, and wishes you to make use of them.

Do not talk of giving up for his

sake. "Giving up" implies a conflict of wills. Say rather giving—such a full, glad, complete surrender of yourself, soul, body, and spirit, that there can be no giving up, because no conflict between you, but perfect harmony of desire, since your Father seeks only your good, and you seek only to know his wishes. You need not spend your life in a constant weighing of duties, and struggling against desires to disobey. This is a hard life—the life, not of a child, but a servant. Walk with your Father, and you will know you are in the right way; if you have any doubts about his wishes, ask him; he will tell you. But do not expect your whole nature to be changed so that you may have with the experience of youth the results of a life-time of discipline. Many a young Christian has been thrown into perplexity because he still found

delight in the innocent pleasures of life, and entered with more zest into the merry conversation of his mates than into the lamentations of aged saints over the trials and mistakes of a life-time. "Pray without ceasing, and in every thing give thanks." A heart that constantly turns heavenward for guidance, and utters its silent thanksgiving for every good, will not be seriously burdened by doubts, or oppressed by a sense of condemnation.

Outside of the limits of positive wrong there is a region including those things of which Paul says while they are lawful they are not expedient; they edify not; things of which we must ask not, What is the harm? but, What is the good? things whose tendency is simply doubtful, yet that doubt ought to settle the question for you. You do not wait to see it

proved that food is tainted with poison—the possibility is enough to secure your avoidance. Again, a perfectly innocent thing may, from personal peculiarity or special circumstance, become for you injurious and therefore wrong. The spectacle of a rational human being who has entered upon an endless existence questioning and hesitating over abandoning any thing so trivial as a mere form of amusement is one over which men and angels might well weep. May no young Christian ever consent to stand in so humiliating a position.

My heart fills with gladness as I think of the army of youth, with its eager impulses, its glowing enthusiasm, its strength, its vigor, its courage, its hopefulness, enlisted under a Leader whose divine power and wisdom are pledged to bring it to victory.


The army of endeavor, not of en-

durance ; whose soldiers have clasped hands in a holy league around the standard of the Lord Christ, vowing loyalty to his service, and promising to look up and lift up in his name. Not a helpless, moaning, half-hearted host to be carried in ambulances through the enemy's country under watch and guard and patrol, but a fighting army ; a triumphant army, going forth conquering and to conquer on its way to the country that is not far off.

Looking to the things that are before ; seeking the things that are above ; lending to every good cause a helping hand. I repeat to you the instructions that centuries ago were spoken by the Master's lips :

“ Let your loins be girt about, and your lamps burning, and you yourselves like men that wait for their Lord.”

LEADING IN PRAYER.

OW many young Christians shrink from going to a prayer-meeting, or sit quaking through the services, unable to gather for themselves help and inspiration from the experience and exhortation of others simply because of the possibility that in some pause the leader may say, "Brother A——, will you lead us in prayer?"

He would not think of refusing. I do not remember ever to have heard one decline to pray when thus called upon, though I have often wondered why the leader of a meeting who would not feel at liberty to say, "Brother A——, will you make a few remarks?" should, without hesitation,

request him to present the petitions of the assembly to God. But though he does not refuse, his tongue cleaves to the roof of his mouth; his ideas float away; he seems to be in the center of a vast empty space; his own voice sounds to him strange and unnatural; he might offer a despairing petition for himself, like Paul, crying out as he began to sink, but he is utterly incapable of "leading in prayer." For one does not lead unless others follow, and he feels that he should gather up the fears and desires, the thanksgivings, confessions, repentings, and promisings of the hearts bowed with him, and present them as one before the mercy-seat so that the things asked for may be the united desire of the whole company of believers.

It is this attempt at praying for others which bewilders and overwhelms the young Christian. He

forgets that he has only to go forward himself, and the others will follow ; to present his own petition, and let it draw the hearts of others after it. We who kneel together are a body of suppliants having common needs, coming to a Father to whom we are under common obligations, to claim common promises. We are all sinners saved by grace ; we all have occasion for thanksgiving and for confession ; we all have need of divine help. If with simplicity and directness you come to God for yourself, you are certain to carry with you the desires of all the others. Therefore the surest way for a young Christian to lead in prayer is to forget all about leading, and pray simply for his own case. Can he do this? He can learn. Prayer may be, as the poet says, " the Christian's vital breath," but there is a great deal to be learned about breathing.

Accustom yourself to pray aloud at your private devotions. The sound of your own voice bewilders you because you are not accustomed to it. A great deal that we call private prayer is only a nebulous, wandering sort of thought, and the habit of praying aloud helps greatly to fix the mind upon the petition, and gives clearness and directness of expression.

Make preparation. Why not consider as well what I am to say to God, as what I am to say to men, especially when I am to take upon myself to come to the King as an ambassador for others? What do I need to make this meeting of profit to me? A sense of God's actual presence. Faith in his willingness to bless. Trust in his love and wisdom. Power to commit myself to his direction. A sincere, teachable spirit to receive the truth. Wisdom to impart it to others.

All this I am to receive through the direct influence of the Holy Spirit in my heart. The presence and influence of that Spirit I am therefore to ask and expect, but I have no right so to rely upon the promise that he will indite my petitions for me as to kneel at the throne with no definite idea of any wants at all.

Be deliberate. Why is it that people who in speaking take time to keep their thought in view, feel that in prayer they must rush on without pause, and pour out a flood of meaningless expressions, or begin a sentence with no thought of its ending? A slow, quiet manner of speech carries not only your own soul with the petition, but the souls of others. It is as if the longing went before, and the speech only presented it to God.

Be direct. Eloquent sentences and roundabout phrases are wholly out of

place in prayer. Such introductions as, "O thou high and holy God, eternal, immortal, invisible, before whom the heavens are unclean, and archangels veil their faces; who dwellest in light unapproachable, glorious in majesty, fearful in praises"—such an invocation may be appropriate to certain occasions, for an enraptured singer reciting the splendors of the Most High, but it is to our Father that we come in prayer, and the simplicity of Christ's own address is the safest for young people to follow. Ask for what you want as simply and directly as you would bring a request to an earthly friend. When one prays, "Our Father, we feel that we need to love thee more, that we may serve thee better. Give us more love to thee, that with our whole hearts we may desire to do thy will," every one who listens goes with him heartily,

word by word. But if he begins, "O Lord, we who are encumbered by mortality, and environed by hinderances, over whose spiritual aspirations hang ever the clouds of human limitation," etc., his fellow suppliants may stumble after him closely enough to bring up haltingly at the end, but the chances are that most of them will fall out by the way.

Finally let me add two "do not's." Do not attempt to convey information to the Lord concerning your church and society affairs. "Thou knowest that I love thee" is all very well, but not "Thou knowest how we have been holding these meetings, and how little interest there is in them, and how indifferent the people are, and how hard it is to awaken them," etc. Beware of "Thou knowest;" it is too often a weapon cast at men, and not a petition to God.

Do not attempt to pray for every good cause on every occasion. I have been in meetings where prayer was asked for some special case, and heard in response only stock prayers touching the Jews, the heathen, the sick, and every thing else within the range of prayer, with scarcely a word touching directly the case presented. This meeting, these souls, this portion of God's word, this possible experience, should be kept definitely before the mind as a subject for united prayer.

The story has often been told of the soldier who defended himself from the charge of holding secret communication with the enemy by declaring that he went into the forest to pray, and that it was God to whom he had been heard speaking.

"Speak to him now, then," said his general. "You never had greater need, for you have only five minutes to live."

The soldier dropped upon his knees and poured forth such a prayer of faith and trust, committing himself so confidently to the tender mercies of his God and Saviour, that every heart was touched. "Let him go," said the general. "No man can acquit himself creditably on parade who has not been accustomed to private drill."

So to the young Christian as to the older one comes the apostle's exhortation, "Pray without ceasing." Cultivate a spirit of prayer; pray much in secret; live in such an atmosphere of prayer that its audible expression will be as natural as your breath, and, going thus to God, you must needs lead after you those who listen.

SPEAKING TO EDIFICATION.



OUT of twenty people who may speak at an average social meeting probably fifteen will do it more or less under compulsion. They feel that they are expected to speak, that the pastor depends upon them, and that in some measure they are responsible for the meetings; and though they have nothing urgent upon their minds that seems to be a message given them to deliver, or a testimony to the grace of God toward them, they speak, and feel that they have discharged a duty. Or they think that they ought to speak; why, they cannot exactly say, except as a sort of penance that they believe must have some merit

because they find it so hard. They call it "taking up the cross;" the moment they sit down in the meeting conscience begins holding it up to them, and they shrink and tremble and hold back, and say, "I'll speak next," and go on delaying and trying to think of something to say, until at last they start desperately up, get through a few set phrases, and sit down with a sigh of relief.

Common sense says, This ought not so to be; it ought to be a delight to testify to the loving-kindness of our common Lord; you are not afraid of these people; you do not fear unkindly criticism; what is the matter with you or with the meetings? Is not the trouble usually that you really have nothing to say? If these same people were met together to discuss the best methods for carrying on a festival or a sociable, or the arrange-

ments for a picnic, they would be lively and unembarrassed and positive in their opinions. Christian living has not taken such a practical place in their thought that they have any definite opinion about it or are eager for helpful information.

You forget the meaning of edification; it is literally "a building up," and the purpose of this social meeting is that by the words spoken there men shall be edified; and if your simple repetition of a passage of Scripture, your declaration of a continued purpose to serve God, or your testimony to his preserving grace, strengthens your own courage, is helpful to you, then you have spoken to edification. But if you would talk as you do in a business meeting you would soon advance beyond this. Why should you not get up and say without any embarrassment, "I wish I

knew of some way to keep my thoughts from wandering when other people pray, so that I could join heartily with them. I can pray myself, or I can follow one or two petitions; but then I find myself thinking of something else." Or, "The thing that is hardest for me to do is to speak to other people about being Christians. I don't seem to know what to say or how to begin." Or, "I don't think I really enjoy the Bible as many people seem to. I read it, and I believe it is God's word; but it does not come right home to my heart as if it meant me, and sometimes I'm not very much interested in it, as I am in other books." Or, "I should like to feel when I pray as many Christians say they do, as if they were actually talking to God, and have just as real a sense of his hearing my words as I have that my

friends right before me are hearing them this minute. And I should like to have a response that would seem as real to me as if one of you should get up and speak to me. People talk of such a feeling, but I don't understand it; I believe God is here; I believe he hears me, but I don't feel it."

Now, some such words as these would express the actual experience which a very large number have brought with them to prayer-meeting; but they keep it to themselves from a feeling that it is not the experience they ought to have, and that it would be the reverse of edifying to confess it, when in fact they would stand a chance of getting some light upon their difficulties, as well as a chance of drawing from some discouraged soul the surprising admission, "Why, other people have the same troubles

that I do ; so perhaps I need not be entirely disheartened, after all."

The adversary himself must have invented the custom of standing up to speak in social meetings where the numbers are not large, and if I were a minister I would do my best to abolish it and to induce my people to sit in some fashion other than in stiff rows, and I would try to induce them to converse together instead of making speeches. Every regular meeting should have a topic, announced beforehand ; but more important still, every Christian should and may have a topic for the day or for the week, so that his reading and thought and prayer are to some definite point, and then he will seldom be at a loss for a clear, practical idea on the subject that is before him.

A young Christian upon whose heart the mere reading of a chapter

makes little impression will find the Scriptures a very different thing if he goes to it as he would to a scientific text-book ; first, to find what the author says, then what he means by it.

“What has God said about prayer?” will set him to searching his book ; “What does he mean by it ?” to meditating, to studying, to asking for light.

When the process of edifying or building up is going on in your life, you will have something to tell or something to ask, if you will be content to be simple, natural, and earnest, and to talk from the experience you have, not from what you fancy you ought to have.

GROWTH IN GRACE.

THE Bible every-where assumes that Christians are to grow; that the divine life implanted within them is to go on increasing in brightness like the light of the morning; imparting its vivifying power like the leaves; pushing steadily upward from the germ through successive stages of leaf, flower, and fruit like the living plant. A Christianity that is not progressive, that is not advancing from its best to-day toward a better to-morrow, is not the Christianity which Paul urged upon the saints at Corinth and Ephesus and Philippi. This form of growth comes necessarily from the very nature of that which is implanted;

all that the Christian has to do is to fulfill the conditions of growth. If the plant has light and warmth and nourishment it must grow; if the Christian keeps in the light, if he feeds upon the word, if his heart is open to divine influences that, like dew and sunshine and refreshing showers, are always falling upon the soul that does not shut itself away from them, he will grow; he must grow.

He is only the branch, and needs but to maintain his vital union with the vine, and the sap will cause his growth. His growth is for fruit-bearing; and the divine energy which pervades every smallest branch while it is united to the vine, will produce fruit at the right time if it is not hindered.

Then there is another figure by which spiritual progress is frequently illustrated, and that is the growth of

the child. The Christian is born into a new life with undeveloped powers, and with neither strength nor wisdom of his own. To the unconscious growth of the plant is added the element of personality; and Christians are exhorted as new-born babes to desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby to feed upon the living bread, and, passing on through the stage of childhood and childish things, to grow up into manhood whose measure shall be the stature of the fullness of Christ. The child eats and sleeps and exercises, and is "under tutors and governors;" and his growth and development takes care of itself. So this spiritual babe, resting without anxiety in the arms that hold him and the love that cares for him, yielding himself without argument to the wisdom that directs him, feeding upon the word, living

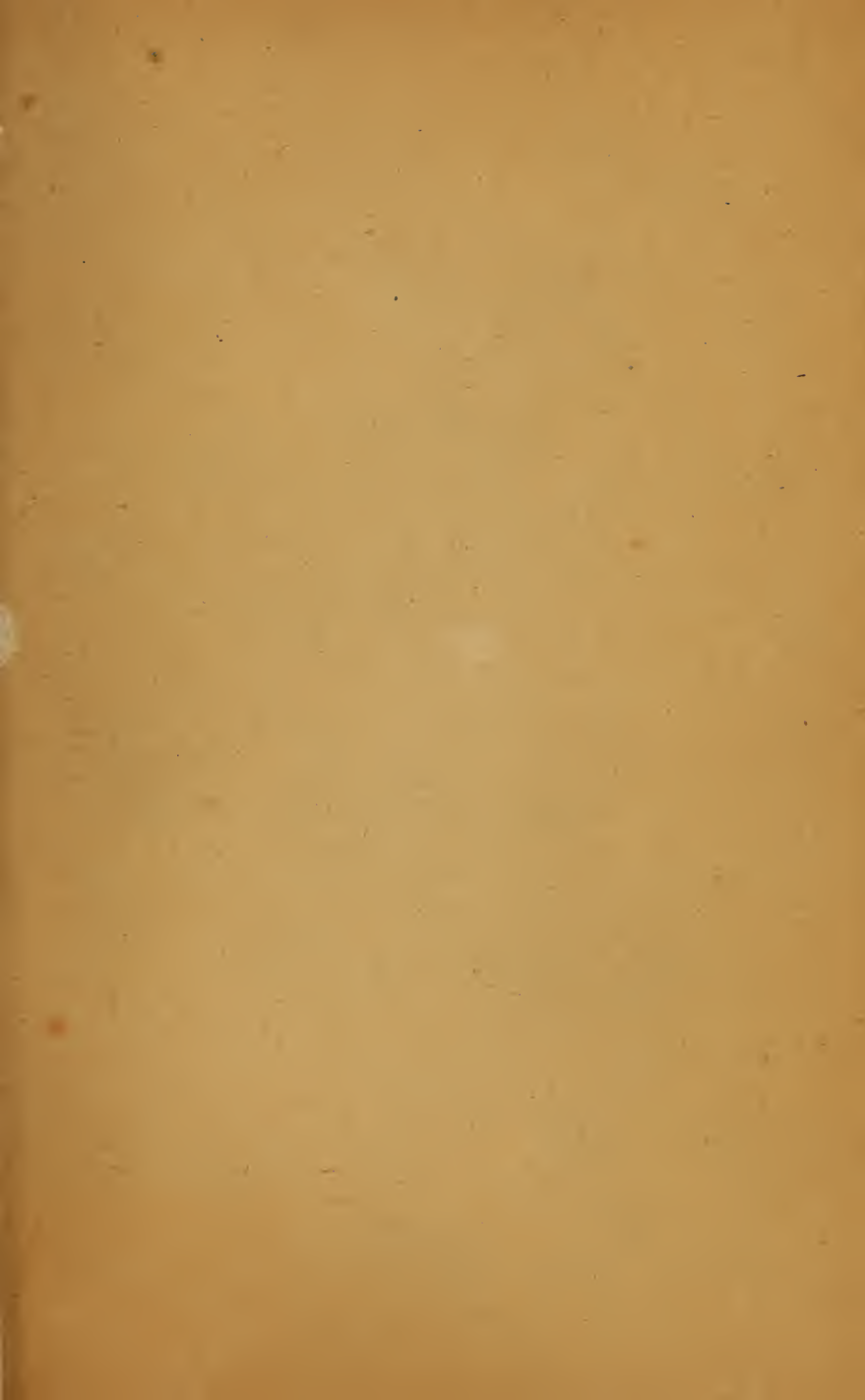
in the light, keeping close to his protector, exercising his new-found powers, is in the way of healthy spiritual growth that is as certain as the growth of the child.

One further figure is that of the building. The Christian is to grow as the temple grows; first the solid foundation already laid for him—the rock Christ Jesus; then upon that he is to add, stone by stone, manliness, knowledge, temperance, patience, and all solid virtues that make up a godly character. The exhortation to energetic, painstaking work does not clash with the idea of growth by indwelling divine energy. Peter's "Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue," supplements Paul's "Ye are God's building."

These same stones with which the Christian builds are elsewhere called fruits of the Spirit; the grace spring-

ing from the divine germ, and nourished by the divine power must be used by the Christian before it becomes an element of character. One has regard to the ability to do; the other to the result of doing.

All growth comes through personal knowledge of Christ. "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord," and so on through the whole New Testament. We are to grow by him; we are to grow up into him; the fruit which we are exhorted to bear is not only for him, but from him, and can be made sure only by abiding in vital union with him, that we may be in sympathy with his purposes and desires. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.



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